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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [CH](#) [GG](#) [IN](#) [IR](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIAN ANALYSTS ON "EGOCENTRIC" U.S., CHINA,
INDIA, AND IRAN

Classified By: DCM Eric S. Rubin for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary: During a September 8 roundtable held at the Embassy, several Russian analysts thought that the cooling in U.S.-Russia relations in the wake of the Georgia crisis was representative of the cyclical nature of the bilateral relationship, while others were pessimistic about achieving the status quo ante. The analysts called upon the U.S. to see Russia's foreign policy as not simply intended to counter the U.S., and to understand that when regional powers such as Russia, China and India pursued their national interests it was "egocentric" to think they always had the U.S. in mind. Russian relations with India were declared "stagnant," because they relied upon troubled military ties, while understanding was expressed for Iran's desire to obtain nuclear weapons in order to deter American threats. End summary.

Russian Actions in Georgia Were Predictable

¶2. (C) At a September 8 foreign policy roundtable focused on South Asia hosted by the DCM, Gennadi Chufrin, a former Russian diplomat and Deputy Director of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, reflected the popular view that Russian actions in Georgia were a predictable reaction to NATO expansion, the U.S. desire to offer MAP to Georgia and Ukraine, and U.S. plans to base a missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic. The U.S. and EU should understand Russia's position on Abkhazia and South Ossetia as a response to Georgian aggression. Chufrin and Vyacheslav Belokrenitsky of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the two senior analysts at the gathering, took a long term view of Russia-U.S. relations and predicted that with time, both sides would move beyond the current tensions. Chufrin argued that the U.S. and Russia understood that there were areas of mutual concern, such as Afghanistan, where cooperation was necessary.

"Everything We Worked for is Ruined"

¶3. (C) Ruslan Pukhov, Director of the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, compared the current environment in Moscow to that at the end of Stalin's reign, when suspicion of the West precluded cooperation. As a result of Georgia, any trust between Moscow and Washington had been "destroyed," making cooperation difficult, if not impossible.

¶4. (C) Nikolay Barkov, Chief of Staff of the Duma Committee on International Affairs, lamented that "everything we worked for is ruined" after the blow-up over Georgia. He recounted the work that had gone into expanding contacts between the Duma committee and the U.S. House and Senate foreign relations committees, which helped improve lines of

communication between Moscow and Washington. Barkov was pessimistic about getting back to this level of contact in the current environment.

U.S. Needs to See Russia and the World Differently

¶5. (C) Several analysts agreed that the U.S. had to move beyond seeing Russia as the "other" nation that stood opposite the U.S. on the world stage when other countries also offered challenges to American foreign policy. In some instances, U.S. and Russian interests converged, such as in preventing Iran from gaining nuclear weapons or insuring that the emergence of China and India occurred with minimum conflict. The analysts thought it interesting that both the U.S. and Russia thought of India as its "friend," and that both countries were perhaps too optimistic in believing that their foreign policy interests converged with New Delhi's.

¶6. (C) Dmitri Trenin made similar observations in a separate conversation, telling us that the U.S. needed to adjust its thinking away from seeing Russian foreign policy as always directed against it. Such a view was "egocentric" and failed to understand that regional powers such as Russia, India, and China took actions in their own interests that were not necessarily related to the U.S. Now that the U.S. was no longer the "hegemon" it appeared to be a decade ago, countries were looking for new, loose alliances and structures such as RIC, a "natural fit" for Russia, India and China, which shared borders and economic and security interests.

¶7. (C) Trenin observed that while Russia and China might envision RIC as a counterweight to the U.S., he doubted this was the case with India. Like the analysts at the roundtable, Trenin thought the U.S. displayed too much optimism in its newfound relationship with New Delhi, which would chart an independent course when its interests diverged from Washington's, such as on Iran and Burma. India, however, kept its disagreements with the U.S. under wraps, whereas Russia made a point of being acerbic.

Russian Relations With India are "Stagnant"

¶8. (C) Belokrenitsky, a South Asia expert, commented that Russian relations with India were "stagnant" as Moscow relied upon military sales in an attempt to maintain a semblance of the special relationship it had with New Delhi during the Cold War. He doubted that India could afford all of the expensive armaments that both Russia and the U.S. hoped to sell it, commenting that India was "not rich, despite what we hear." Russia had not helped its position with India through the mismanagement of arms contracts, for example in the project to modernize the Russian aircraft carrier Admiral Grushko for delivery to India. The project was several years behind schedule and 1.2 billion dollars over the original contract price.

Why Shouldn't Iran Want a Bomb to Deter the U.S.?

¶9. (C) Pukhov, a military analyst, questioned why Russia should work with the U.S. to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. With the harsh American rhetoric directed at Iran, and the example of U.S. military action against Iraq and Serbia, it was understandable that Tehran would want nuclear weapons for deterrence purposes. Belokrenitsky added that we should not think that a nuclear Iran would act irrationally, and pointed to the example of India and Pakistan, both of which managed their deterrence postures in a tense region without igniting a nuclear exchange. Chufirin added that North Korea served as an example for Iran by using its nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip to move toward normalizing relations with the U.S. and others. Iran, however, was "playing a game of brinkmanship" by coming as close to possible to developing nuclear weapons without

actually doing so.
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